

**Asymmetric Democracy in Indonesia;  
Democracy without Governor Direct Election<sup>1</sup>**

*Tunjung Sulaksono<sup>2</sup> and Eko Priyo Purnomo<sup>3,4</sup>*

**Abstract**

These paper goals criticise the terms of democracy, particularly in the implementation of direct election and give the example that direct election cannot be implemented without paying attention at the local contexts. This paper shows the conflict between the central and local government in dealing with the changing of the Yogyakarta's Governor.

Democracy suggests that a government should be governed by people supports and dealt with people demands. Also, voting system and electoral participation create the legitimating government. Many countries claim that they are democratic government. As a result, the government should conduct a direct election. However, it can be just a jargon, and they are trapped on a procedural democracy. People cannot participate on creating government policies. Democracy mostly constructs irrational voters, and the government is controlled by the elite so the people still poor and less access

Accordingly, the above theories, democracy should rely on its community context and cannot be generalized. This paper gives a practical example of the asymmetric democracy that executed in Yogyakarta Special Province (TSP). In Indonesia, there is a regular election on every five years. In this event, the Yogyakarta people vote who is their local (district, province), the national senator members and the President, but they do not elect their Governor. Their Governor is their Crowned King. Because of implementing the democracy belief, the Central government proposes the YSP people to elect their governor. This idea reveals many debates both in national level and Regional level. As a result, this paper describes the discourses on Governor Election in YSP and emphasizes the YSP people needs. The last part suggests the

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper has been presented at 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Public Organization (ICONPO) 11 May 2012, Korea University, Korea.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Governmental Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Governmental Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup> Author can be contacted by email [eko@umy.ac.id](mailto:eko@umy.ac.id)

asymmetric democracy that can be implemented as a solution on the political crisis in Yogyakarta.

**Key Words:** *Democracy, Participation, Direct Election and Asymmetric democracy.*

## **Background**

The privilege of Yogyakarta Province leads to a conflict between central and local government, particularly in Yogyakarta. This issue rises two terms, which are direct determination or election. Actually, it could not happen not only in this year but also every five years. In 1998, the issue occurred when the period of Governor would be terminated. Both of two terms, direct determination and election should vis-à-vis. The central government argued that the first term reflects undemocratic, and the second one is more democratic. It can be true if we just look at the privilege of Yogyakarta province in the changing of the governor and we do not pay attention in and respect of local values.

The central government strongly argues that direct election should be implemented in all of local election in Indonesia. If any local governments do not act like that, it seems they are not democratic. This argument can be found in Rancangan Undang-Undang Keistimewaan (RUUK)- Draft of Privileged Act for Yogyakarta Province. According to this draft, the governor should be elected by people directly. It cannot only the rights of the Yogyakarta's King. Even though, this idea is in opposition to the local interest and creates the local's apathies. It should be followed by Yogyakarta's community.

Most of Yogyakarta's citizens wish for their governor is their king. On relating with the above mentioned, the Department of Governmental studies, University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY) conducted polling. The poll results revealed that 92 percent people did not want the Governor to be elected. This outcome can predict if the central government still drives their idea about the direct election, it can make the conflict more dangerous. This essay goals attempt to elaborate several ideas. First of all, this essay examines the idea of central government in direct election. Does this idea have a strong theoretical basis? As a consequence, this paper gives the literature review about democracy and its function. Second is an assessment how local direct election contributes to consolidation of democracy in Indonesia.

Thirdly, the paper suggests an alternative way, how to deal the democracy idea and solve the Yogyakarta conflict.

### **Redeveloping Direct Election in Democracy Belief**

The term of Democracy is truly broadly meaning and can be huge perspectives in it. This term is dominant not only in political issues but also in academic discourses. Classical democracy suggests that a government should be governed by people supports and dealt with people demands (Schumpeter, 1947). Consequently, the government should get a support from the communities or people. In relating to this idea, the government performs meeting. The events that people can give and articulate their interest.

In addition, there is another idea of democracy, called by procedural democracy. In 1970's Procedural democracy idea was most cited by political scientists such as Robert Dahl and Samuel Huntington. Many counties believe that direct election is a symbol of democracy(Lawson & Merkl, 2007). If any counties do not have direct election, they are not democratic. This idea seems that the direct election one and only as an indicator of democracy. Actually, this argument follows the Schumpeter's idea. He says that democracy can exist if there is an institution where people can articulate their voice and people can compete to get power. Schumpeter emphasizes that procedure, and method should be present in the political system. As a result, this idea called as the procedural democracy.

This argument also is followed by Diamond and Plattner, they said that voting system and electoral participation create the legitimating government (Diamond & Plattner, 2006). Consequently, many countries and regimes should adopt democracy. If they do not follow this term, they can be eliminated from the world cooperation. Some scientists suggest there are several requirements if countries want to be called a democratic country. First, fairness and open political competition, there should be existed parties that can compete as a ruler. Second, participation, the societies or citizens can participate in the election and articulate their interest in public policy making. Third, freedom of speech; There is a freedom to communities and press to organise and then articulate their idea.

Obviously, the idea of democracy is broadly followed by many countries. Every election and politician activities should be exposed by media and citizens. Mostly, people are driven by the politicians' activities and media exposure. If any countries fail to conduct their election, these countries would be blamed as the failure of democracy. Actually, there are some weaknesses of the democratic procedural system (Khouri, 2011). For example, accumulation of power, when any parties have ruled they just mobilise the society and take many benefits from it. The worst phenomenon is behaviour of politicians in elections. They give lots of promises to their voter but it cannot be implemented when they are elected in the elections.

Marxist also states that democracy fails to create the prosperity (Femia, 1993}. This idea just focuses on the participation and freedom of speech but they forget to make social justice. The workers and marginalised people just be mobilised in elections but they cannot participate in the political structure directly. This situation is called as the paradox of democracy. Unluckily, many countries implement this minimal democracy. Moreover, Many scientists criticise that democracy is not implemented properly (Dahl, 1989; Femia, 1993; Friedman & Friedman, 1982). Many countries claim that they are democratic government. However, it is just a jargon, and they are trapped on a procedural democracy. People cannot participate on creating government policies. According to Dahl and Friedman, democracy mostly constructs irrational voters, and the government is controlled by the elite so the people still poor and less access (Fukuyama, Diamond, & Plattner, 2012)

According to the above mentioned, it is clear that the idea of direct election in a democracy system should be evaluated. Redefinition and revitalisation of the democracy theory have been creating from the last decade. Particularly, the ideas that direct election cannot be the main indicator of democracy. The direct election is useful to gather the legitimacy but it should be evaluated by its people needs and deal with the people contexts.

### **Local Election, Democracy and Yogyakarta's crisis**

Even though, democracy is not the best political system. It is a better system than monarchy, aristocracy and gerontocracy and it has been implemented broadly in the world.

Currently, there are two major democracies which are the direct democracy and the representative democracy. As a result, Indonesian government put into practice a direct election in both the central and local government. In 2004, there was a presidential election and Mr. Yudhoyono was elected as the Indonesian president. It was the first direct election in the presidential election.

Before 2004, most of the local leaders were chosen by local house representative. However, it was changed by Law, no 32 2004 about local government. According to the Law, no 32 2004, both district leader and provincial leaders-Governor should be chosen by their local people (Anonim, 2004). This phenomenon was a radical political changing in Indonesia. The law was decided by Megawati's regime to deal with the Indonesian people interest. Direct election in local government was implemented firstly in 2005. The regular election is held on every five years in both Central and local government in Indonesia (Liddle & Mujani, 2006). Therefore, there are several questions arisen. What is the benefit of direct election in local government? What do people gain in this event?

Actually, the idea of direct election in local government is a solution from the failure of Soeharto's regime. Soeharto's regime was totalitarianism which the system was directed by Soeharto itself (Balais-Serrano, Ito, & Asian Network for Free Elections., 1999). Indonesian people never involved in any aspect in public policy and politics. The president was selected by Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People's Consultative Assembly), and every local leader in both District and Provisional Level was chosen by the local house representative (Antlöv & Cederroth, 2004). After Soeharto stepped down, social and political system has been changed and then a direct election for choosing the president and local leader has been implemented(Tomsa, 2008).

Therefore, this idea also has been introduced by central government to be implemented in Yogyakarta Special Province. In 2004 Mr. Yudhoyono, Indonesian President, wanted to use an election for electing the Yogyakarta's Governor. However, It could not happen because most of Yogyakarta people criticized and against this idea. AS a result, in 2004 Sri Sultan, the Yogyakarta's King, still remained as The Governor. In addition, in 2011, this idea has been implemented again by Mr. Yudhoyono. He argued that the Governor should be selected by

Yogyakarta people directly. Consequently, this idea led to a political crisis in Yogyakarta. Most of Yogyakarta and also Indonesian people fought it. They think that Yogyakarta is a Special Province and should have privileges. As privileges, the governor should be hold by the King.

Based on the above context, the Laboratory of political studies, Universities Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta conducted polling. Using cluster random sampling and iterative two-step methods were chosen. The polling interviewed 500 respondents who represented social and political society in Yogyakarta. As a result, 96.6 % people support the privilege of Yogyakarta, 97.5% People who graduated from Higher Education agreed to establish the privilege of Yogyakarta. In terms of the direct election for the Governor, 93.2% people support the current Sultan or King as the Governor without election. This result is clear that the majority of Yogyakarta's people want to sustain the privilege of Yogyakarta

The Yogyakarta's crisis became a major issue in Indonesia. It can represent the relationship between central and local government. Besides, it is a conflict of democracy's idea and local value. We can understand that election people can vote and participate. However, direct election still has many weaknesses. Firstly, money politics, most of the election was costly and many of the politicians spent lots of money to buy the voters (Bertrand, Briquet, & Pels, 2006). Secondly, conflict and riots, There were several conflicts during election in Indonesia from 1995-2009 (Ganguly, 2012; Jain, O'Leary, & Patrikeeff, 2002). Thirdly, marginalised society, many of election in Indonesia was manipulation of voters' support and marginalised minority ethic (Mietzner & East-West Center Washington., 2006; Schwarz & Institute of Southeast Asian Studies., 2004).

Democracy's prospects and consolidation of democracy could be not running well. Scientists argue that there are some threats to implementation of democracy in the third world such as, executive heavy, neo-patrimonial in political system, high corruption in every level, instability and weakness of party, cooptation of civil society, segregation of ethnic and religion, massif poverty and less international support (Erb, Sulistiyanto, & Institute of Southeast Asian Studies., 2009). Unluckily, most of the above phenomena exist in Indonesia so it can be predicted that Indonesian democratisation is not implemented appropriately.

## Conclusion and Solution

If direct election is a role model of the democracy, it should rely on the social and political of community contexts. It cannot disobey the basis argumentation of democracy that says *Vox populi, vox Deim*-the people's voice is God's Voice. The people voice should be followed by political elite. In relating with above contexts, the political crisis in Yogyakarta should be solved. The Privilege of Yogyakarta Province should be dealt with demand of Central government. Therefore, one suggested solution can be described which is consensus method.

Consensus is deferent with a formal meeting. The formal requires a formal leader, rigid procedure, and formal agenda. As a result, the formal meeting has weaknesses such as, marginalised minority; avoid minority interest, and leader's agenda. On the other hand, Consensus relies on the process and deliberative democracy. Each party or stake-holder can articulate their interest and develop actively their agenda and goals(Mansbridge, 1983).

Dealing with protecting the privilege of Yogyakarta Special Province and solving the Yogyakarta political crisis, there are several solutions. The solutions that are followed by the consensus's idea. Firstly, Central government should hear the voice of Yogyakarta that represented most of Yogyakarta people against a direct election for choosing the Governor. Secondly, Local government and central government could be sooner establishing the rule of law about the fulfilment of King as the Governor. Thirdly, democracy is universal value that has many weaknesses also so this idea should rely on the local contexts and adopt the local values.

## References

- Undang-Undang Tentang Pemerintahan Daerah, 32 Stat. (2004).
- Antlöv, H., & Cederroth, S. (2004). *Elections in Indonesia : the new order and beyond*. London ; New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Balais-Serrano, E., Ito, T., & Asian Network for Free Elections. (1999). *Democratization in Indonesia : report of the 1999 election observation mission, 25 May-10 June 1999*. Bangkok: Asian Network for Free Elections, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development.

- Bertrand, R., Briquet, J.-L., & Pels, P. (2006). *The hidden history of the secret ballot*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Diamond, L. J., & Plattner, M. F. (2006). *Electoral systems and democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Erb, M., Sulistiyanto, P., & Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. (2009). *Deepening democracy in Indonesia? : direct elections for local leaders (Pilkada)*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Femia, J. V. (1993). *Marxism and democracy*. Oxford England, New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press.
- Friedman, M., & Friedman, R. D. (1982). *Capitalism and freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fukuyama, F., Diamond, L. J., & Plattner, M. F. (2012). *Poverty, inequality, and democracy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ganguly, R. (2012). *Autonomy and ethnic conflict in South and South-East Asia*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge.
- Jain, P., O'Leary, G., & Patrikeeff, F. (2002). *Crisis and conflict in Asia : local, regional and international responses*. Huntington, N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers.
- Khoury, R. (2011). The Strengths and Weaknesses of American Democracy. Retrieved from [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/21332/strengths\\_and\\_weaknesses\\_of\\_american\\_democracy.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/21332/strengths_and_weaknesses_of_american_democracy.html)
- Lawson, K., & Merkl, P. H. (2007). *When parties prosper : the uses of electoral success*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Liddle, R. W., & Mujani, S. (2006). Indonesia in 2005 - A new multiparty presidential democracy. *Asian Survey*, 46(1), 132-139.
- Mansbridge, J. J. (1983). *Beyond adversary democracy* (University of Chicago Press ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mietzner, M., & East-West Center Washington. (2006). *The politics of military reform in post-Suharto Indonesia : elite conflict, nationalism, and institutional resistance*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1947). *Capitalism, socialism, and democracy* (2d ed.). New York, London,: Harper & brothers.



- Schwarz, A., & Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. (2004). *Indonesia : the 2004 election and beyond*.  
Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Tomsa, D. (2008). *Party politics and democratization in Indonesia : Golkar in the post-Suharto era*.  
London ; New York: Routledge.